

# United Nations

## Press Release

---

Department of Public Information • News Coverage Service • New York

---

Prepared by Central News

DH/811  
22 January 1991

### TUESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- + Security Council urges parties to conflict in Liberia to continue to respect cease-fire, co-operate with ECOWAS; appeals for humanitarian assistance.
- + Secretary-General renews appeal for withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait to prevent further escalation of death and destruction,
- + Secretary-General is "extremely concerned" about condition of allied pilots captured by Iraqi forces, saying "it goes against Geneva Conventions ... in a very clear manner".
- + UNRWA expresses concern about insufficient protective measures for Palestinians in occupied territories in event of chemical weapons attack.
- + UNICEF releases \$2 million from its Emergency Reserve Fund to assist countries preparing for influx of people fleeing from Gulf war; dispatches medical supplies, tents and blankets to Amman.
- + Conference on Disarmament opens 1991 session, hearing message from Secretary-General and statement by Conference President.

\*\*\*

The Security Council this afternoon called on the parties to the conflict in Liberia to continue to respect the cease-fire agreement and to co-operate fully with the efforts of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to restore peace and normalcy in Liberia. The Council also supported the appeal launched by ECOWAS for increased humanitarian assistance to the people of Liberia.

The Council, through a statement read out by its President, Bagbeni Adeito Nzengeya (Zaire), at a formal meeting following consultations on the situation in Liberia, commended the efforts of the Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS to promote peace and normalcy in Liberia. It also expressed appreciation to the Member States, the Secretary-General and humanitarian organizations for the humanitarian assistance to Liberia, and

(more)

called for additional assistance. The Council welcomed the resumption of the United Nations emergency programme in Liberia following the acceptance of a general cease-fire.

In a statement to the Council, the representative of Liberia, William Bull, said it was imperative to review and perhaps amend the Charter provision concerning non-interference in the internal affairs of Member States, as that provision had hindered the Council from exercising its moral obligation and authority. Earlier efforts to have the Council consider the situation in Liberia had not been approved. Only now, following the loss of thousands of lives and great destruction, was the Council meeting to address that situation.

Full implementation of the ECOWAS peace plan could lead to a durable peace, if all parties to the conflict would hold the interests of the people paramount, he said. He also called attention to the need to address the deteriorating economic and social conditions in Liberia.

The representative of Nigeria, Ibrahim A. Gambari, said this was not the time to revisit the events that had led to the war in Liberia or to apportion blame. The leaders of ECOWAS had decided not to take sides but to reconcile the opposing parties, to restore peace and to establish a peace plan. The Security Council should urge the parties in Liberia to continue to respect the cease-fire. He called on the international community to contribute not only humanitarian support but also financial and logistical support to the ECOWAS Cease-fire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) so that it could complete its mission in Liberia successfully.

\*\*\*

Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar said today through his spokesman that he had witnessed with "profound grief and anxiety the increasing severity of the war and the widening of the area of hostilities" in the Persian Gulf. To prevent the toll in death and destruction escalating any further and the suffering of the peoples in the region from growing even worse, the Secretary-General appealed most sincerely to the Iraqi authorities to respond positively to his appeal of 15 January, so that efforts might be resumed to find a peaceful solution to "this grave and tragic conflict". The statement said the Secretary-General was in touch with the main humanitarian agencies of the United Nations system and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), with a view towards ensuring that humanitarian help was provided to those afflicted by this conflict as promptly as circumstances permitted.

Responding to correspondents' questions at the noon briefing, the Spokesman said the Secretary-General had been in touch with the President of the Red Cross this morning and also with the Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF); the Secretary-General's Personal Representative for humanitarian aspects relating to the situation in the Gulf, Prince Sadruddin Aga Kahn; and the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator (UNDRO), M'Hamed Essaafi.

(more)

\*\*\*

On his arrival at Headquarters this morning, the Secretary-General told correspondents that he was "extremely concerned" about the condition of the allied pilots captured by Iraqi forces, because it was something that went against the Geneva Conventions "in a very clear manner". It was a practice that could not be supported at the United Nations.

Asked by a correspondent about reported proposals that President Saddam Hussein of Iraq be brought to trial for war crimes, and whether there might be a role for the United Nations in such a situation, the Secretary-General replied: "If the United Nations is asked to do something, we are always ready to co-operate with any effort, but I haven't heard anything about that particular question."

Questioned about recent cease-fire proposals, the Secretary-General said some Member countries were working on proposals for a pause in hostilities. He emphasized, however, that there must first be an Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait, in accordance with the Security Council resolutions.

The Secretary-General told correspondents this afternoon that he deeply regretted today's attack on Tel Aviv by Iraq. There was no justification for such an attack, he said and expressed the hope that all parties would show restraint in order to avoid a worsening of the situation.

\*\*\*

The Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), Giorgio Giacomelli, has expressed concern to the Israeli Government that sufficient measures have not been taken to protect the Palestinian inhabitants of the occupied territory against the possibility of a chemical weapons attack.

Mr. Giacomelli noted in Vienna today that the Israeli authorities have not taken the same steps to protect the more than 1.5 million Palestinians in the occupied territory of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, for whose welfare they are responsible, as they have for the Israeli population as a whole. "Such steps would include the distribution of masks and other protective gear against chemical attacks, as well as the installation of adequate warning devices, such as air raid sirens", he said.

The Commissioner-General observed that UNRWA has repeatedly approached the Israeli authorities on this matter in recent months and received assurances that gasmasks and protective gear would be distributed to the Palestinian population at large. However, to date, only a fraction of the Palestinians in the West Bank and all those in Jerusalem have received masks.

While calling for the issuance of protective gear for the entire Palestinian population in the occupied territory, the Agency has approached

(more)

several Governments for assistance in supplying gas masks for essential UNRWA personnel. The first response has come from the Swedish Government, which has provided 25,000 gas-mask kits. These are to be distributed selectively by UNRWA, starting with personnel in public and health services, including hospital and clinic staff, in the West Bank and Gaza.

Mr. Giacomelli expressed his great appreciation to the Swedish Government for its prompt and generous response to the Agency's appeal.

\* \* \*

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) today dispatched medical supplies, tents and blankets to Amman and released \$2 million from its Emergency Reserve Fund to assist countries preparing for possible large influxes of people fleeing the Gulf war.

In a press release issued today, UNICEF said it was working with the Governments in four countries -- Jordan, Syria, Iran and Turkey -- to establish camps to shelter thousands of people that might be displaced by the fighting. It was also working with local authorities to establish two new tented camps in Jordan. Ruweishid, with a capacity of 10,000, and Azraq-3, which can accommodate 30,000, will be ready to receive displaced people within the next two weeks. With five existing camps, Jordan will be able to receive 110,000 displaced people.

More than 1 million people, most of them transient foreign workers, crossed into Jordan from Iraq and Kuwait shortly after the crisis erupted in August last year.

According to UNICEF, the United Nations Disaster Relief Organization (UNDRO) has launched a special appeal for \$175 million on behalf of the United Nations for the Regional Humanitarian Plan of Action relating to the war in the Gulf.

\* \* \*

The Conference on Disarmament, the single multilateral negotiating forum in the field of disarmament, this morning began its 1991 session at the Palais des Nations in Geneva, the first part of which will last approximately 10 weeks.

In a message to the Conference, Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar observed that the Conference was beginning its 1991 session under the shadow of war. The Persian Gulf crisis was a poignant reminder of the truth that peace and stability in international relations rested on full respect for the purposes and principles of the Charter. That was the indispensable condition for a stable international security order within which progress in arms limitation and disarmament had to proceed hand in hand. It was, he said, ironic that the current situation, with its grave portents, should confront the Conference when a phenomenal positive change had taken place at a global level.

(more)

In the present evolving situation, stated the Secretary-General, the role of the Conference on Disarmament, as a single multilateral negotiating body, became even greater, and the successful discharge of its responsibilities was needed more than before. Nuclear disarmament remained, as it had to, a priority issue. Another priority was the completion of negotiations on a comprehensive chemical weapons convention.

In an opening statement, the Conference President, W. Rasaputram (Sri Lanka), said consultations were well advanced on organizational matters on which consensus was needed so that the Conference might soon begin its substantive work. Those questions related to the agenda; the programme of work in the light of the agreements reached last year on the improved and effective functioning of the Conference; and the establishment of subsidiary bodies on various agenda items. He hoped agreement could be reached at the next plenary meeting on a number of those subjects.

In a related development, Carl-Magnus Hyltenius (Sweden), Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee on Chemical Weapons, a subsidiary body of the Conference on Disarmament, briefed the press today in Geneva on the status of the negotiations under way on the draft convention on chemical weapons. He said existing international instruments, notably the Geneva Protocols on chemical weapons, had definite weaknesses because they did not prohibit use of chemical weapons, and the draft convention was seeking to address that weakness.

Asked whether the Gulf war represented a setback or impetus, Mr. Hyltenius said it certainly illustrated the urgency of the need to promote the conclusion of the convention. The problem of chemical weapons was not a theoretical one for the people in the Middle East living with this threat. Specific sanctions in case of a breach would have to be decided upon by the executive council to be set up under the chemical weapons convention.

\* \* \* \* \*